

Senators Hear Snooper's Tale

Easy Access to Hotel Rooms, Phone Taps Are Described

By George Gardner Jr.
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A snooper-snooping Senate subcommittee was told yesterday that Washington hotel rooms are never locked to some private eyes while others can catch public officials in flagrant delicto as far away as Miami.

The first charge came from the subcommittee's chief counsel with an assist from a Washington area locksmith. The second came from a Florida sleuth named Watson "Steve" Roper.

A former FBI agent, Roper told how a simple phone call from a Washington private detective led him, no questions asked, into the private life of

an unnamed "assistant district attorney" from Maryland.

"We determined that the man was definitely homosexual," Roper said, adding that his assignment was to get "concrete, specific proof."

The official was on a convention trip to Miami in 1960. He was steered to a male date, Roper said, and then to a hotel room rigged for sound and pictures.

"Was the case successful?" Subcommittee Counsel Bernard Fensterwald asked.

"So far as obtaining a recording and photographs, yes sir," Roper said.

Sen. Quentin N. Burdick (D-N.D.) asked whether the investigation was undertaken for

political purposes, or some other motive such as a court case.

Roper said he didn't have the slightest idea, since he did not meet the Washington detective's client or learn the reason for the investigation. The Cape Coral, Fla., private detective said.

The rest of the hearing indicated working alliance between private detectives in various cities and, it was charged, among private detectives, safe-and-lock companies and phone answering outfits in Washington.

Have Master Keys

Without giving any details, Fensterwald said he had "very good information that a number of private detectives have master keys to the major hotels in Washington."

The locksmith, Jesse C. Hitt, agreed that some locksmiths would provide such keys. "You can't stop free enterprise," he said bitterly.

Hitt and other area locksmiths have complained in the past that their business is somehow being pirated. They suspect answering services of intercepting their phone calls.

Hitt claimed he has lost \$25,000 in the past four years. People, he said, have repeatedly turned up at his shop to tell of paying exorbitant prices for repair work they assumed he had done since no other locksmith had been called.

Arthur Snowberger, an electronics engineer from Washington County, Md., testified it would be a simple matter for an answering service

which often has extra lines for expansion, to intercept calls to businesses while the businesses remain unaware that the calls are being diverted.

To Check Ownership

Fensterwald said the Subcommittee intended to check into the ownership of private detective firms, safe-and-lock companies, answering services and other firms in a position to intercept calls to see if there are any names that keep cropping up.

For openers at the hearing Subcommittee Chairman Edward V. Long (D-Mo.) tore into the public information chief for the Internal Revenue Service.

Long threatened to have IRS Information Chief Joseph Rosapepe cited for contempt of Congress for refusing to divulge the name of the IRS investigator who wrote a memo that described a radio series aimed at cutting down the moonshine trade in the South as a wonderful way "to brainwash the citizenry."

Rosapepe said the investigator used "bad judgement" but didn't deserve the "ridicule" of public disclosure. He added that he was acting under orders of IRS Commissioner Sheldon Cohen in refusing to disclose the name.

Long vowed to protest to the White House.